

Coronavirus Position (30/03/2020)

As the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak continues to create some audit restrictions which could have an impact on the certification status of certain sites, the GFSI Technical Committee has agreed in union with the Board that CPOs, who wish to comply with GFSI during this period of crisis, are advised to proceed as follows:

- Follow IAF ID3:2011, “Management of Extraordinary Events or Circumstances Affecting AB’s, CB’s and Certified Organizations”.
- CPO’s and CB’s should follow requirements stipulated by applicable national regulation to manage the COVID-19 outbreak; if those differ from the content of this position, the regulatory requirements prevail.
- For China, follow the guidance published by CNCA http://www.cnca.gov.cn/xxgk/zxtz/2020/202002/t20200204_57628.shtml
- CB’s must review if there is a possibility of using auditors from other regions that have no travel restrictions, to audit sites.
- CPO’s have the following two options where audits are due at certified sites:
 - Follow the process as detailed below to extend the certificate.
 - Allow the certificate to lapse.
- For countries and/ or regions, where sites cannot be visited because of travel restrictions, and no auditors are able to reach the site, the following considerations are recommended to determine if an extension to their certificate can be granted:
 - The CB must fully demonstrate that there is no other possibility but to extend the certificate.
 - If an extension is granted, all decisions and procedures that led to the extension of the certificate, must be fully documented and based on risk assessments as indicated on the IAF ID3:2011 document.
 - Continual re-evaluation by the CB of the certified site’s ability to accept an on-site audit should be maintained and an audit should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.
 - The certificate extension can last for a period of up to 6 months. GFSI will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation in the meantime to determine whether further actions are needed.
 - GFSI will also try to publish monthly updates.
 - CPOs should have a system in place to track for how long the certificate extension has been granted and to which sites.
- Once the travel restriction has been lifted, audits should be rescheduled, and CB’s should establish procedures to determine via a risk assessment the order in which the rescheduling of audits should take place.
- CPO’s will be asked to submit their risk assessment for granting a certificate extension to GFSI for review.
- GFSI will facilitate a forum specifically for the purpose of exploring options for non-standard auditing (remote, virtual) that it could recognise if the COVID-19 crisis continues indefinitely.